



Child Development Lab

Personality Parallels: Parent Neuroticism Predicts Child Social Anxiety

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Introduction

- Previous studies support maternal personality to be associated with the development of mental health disorders due to the interaction between the mother and the child. The mother's personality guides the mother's behavior towards the child and influences the mother's interaction with the child (Pearson et. al., 2017; Achtergarde, S. et al., 2015).
- During adolescence, external factors associated with social anxiety can include unsatisfactory relationships with peers, changes in academic responsibility, and other lifestyle changes including puberty (Erath, Flanagan, & Bierman, 2007).
- Parents with neuroticism tend to not be as present in providing support to their children. The inability to control emotions leads to drastic behavior presentations (Achtergarde, S. et al., 2015)

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between maternal personality when the child is younger and the prevalence of social anxiety disorder in the adolescent?
 - *H1: There is a significant relationship between parent report of parent neuroticism at 4 years and child report of social anxiety at 15 years.*
- Are there differences in child reporting of social anxiety (SCARED) based on gender at 15 years?
 - *H1: There are significant differences in child reporting of social anxiety (SCARED) based on male or female gender selection.*
- What is the relationship between Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and maternal personality when the child is younger?
 - *H1: There will be significant relationship between maternal neuroticism and ADHD inattention.*

Method

Participants

- A sample of participants were recruited from a mid-Atlantic university at ages 4, 12, and 15 (n=243). There are 117 males and 126 females.

Measures

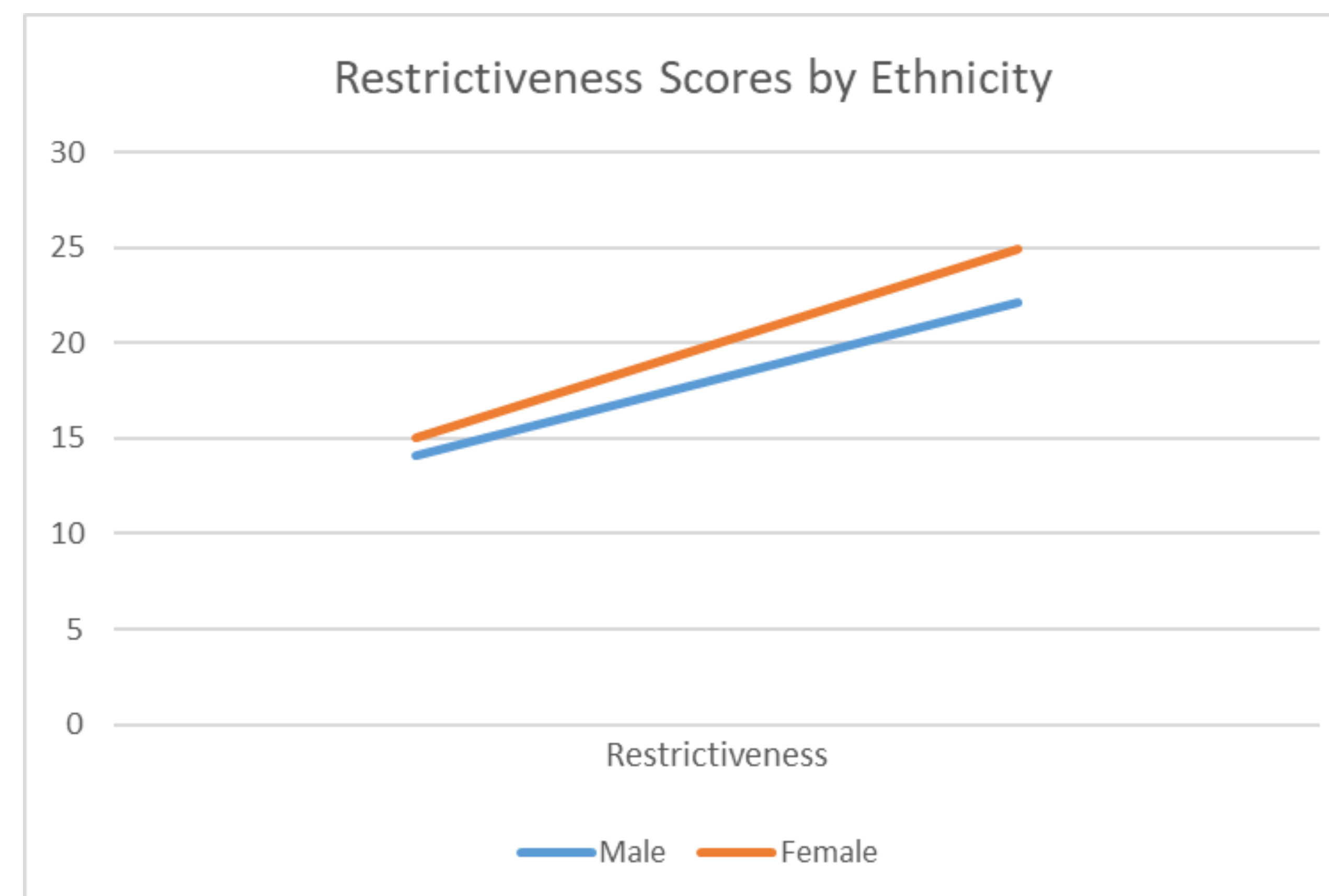
- (NEO-FFI) parent report (4 years).
- Child-report Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorders (SCARED) scales (12 and 15 years): Total Anxiety.
- SNAP IOWA Inattention scale (7 years).

Results

- Linear regression analyses were performed to investigate the role of parental personality in predicting later child social anxiety on child-reported social anxiety and parent-reported personality assessment.

12-years Predicting child-reported Total Anxiety: $F(1,168) = 4.868, p = .029$;

15-years Predicting child-reported Total Anxiety: $F(1, 149) = 8.05, p < .001$



- Independent sample t-tests were performed in order to determine differences between male and females in terms of self-reported social anxiety when parent neuroticism is high.

Discussion

- The current study demonstrated that there is a statistically significant correlation between the mean value on the NEO-FFI parent report at 4 years and the mean value on the SCARED child report at 15 years.
- The ADHD analysis provides a promising direction on how neuroticism can affect other mental disorders.
 - There is a correlation between neuroticism (NEO-FFI parent report) at 4 years and inattention ADHD scale (SNAP inattention IOWA)
- Statistically significant differences were found between male and female scores on parent reports of Total Child Anxiety (SCARED).
 - Females were rated higher on Total Anxiety than males.
 - However, it was not significant to label gender as a mediator between social anxiety and neuroticism.

Implications

- Future research should explore how gender identity influences the self reporting of other mental health disorders and the impact of age on the difference.
- Implement prenatal programs in woman's health clinics to discuss the impact maternal personality on childcare and the long term effects on the child.
- Discuss with parents of adolescents on gender differences in the reporting of social anxiety and research on factors that impact the difference
- Future research should explore other mental health disorders and the personality type associated with the disorder.

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